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Elimination of racism and racial discrimination: comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Global efforts for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/144. It focuses on activities undertaken during the period from August 2005 to June 2006 by States, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, international and regional organizations, national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations and youth groups and organizations implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

* A/61/150.

** The present report is being submitted after the deadline so as to incorporate most recently received information.

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Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–4	3
II.	Contributions received	5–36	4
	A. Member States	6–31	4
	B. Regional organizations	32	9
	C. National human rights institutions	33–36	9
III.	Update on activities	37–65	10
	A. United Nations human rights mechanisms	38–51	10
	B. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	52–65	13
IV.	Conclusions	66–69	15

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 60/144, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution to the Assembly at its sixty-first session. The present report focuses on activities relating to the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance of 2001, since the submission of the previous report to the General Assembly (A/60/307). In this regard, reference is also made to reports previously submitted on the comprehensive implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-eighth, fifty-ninth and sixtieth sessions (E/CN.4/2002/21, E/CN.4/2003/18 and E/CN.4/2004/17) and to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh, fifty-eighth, fifty-ninth and sixtieth sessions (A/57/443, A/58/324, A/59/375, A/60/307 and Corr.1 and 2).

2. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, by note verbale dated 26 April 2006 sent to States and by letter also dated 26 April 2006 sent to United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, international and regional organizations, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations, requested information for contributions to the report of the Secretary-General on global efforts for the total elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

3. In order to facilitate the preparation of replies, a "Guidance note on contributions" was also sent requesting that replies should concentrate on the following questions: (a) has the State developed an action plan to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or another form of intolerance, or to promote non-discrimination and equality; (b) has the State adopted specific policies to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or another form of intolerance, or to promote non-discrimination and equality; (c) has the State developed specific forms of cooperation with or has your State contributed to the work of regional bodies or centres that combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or another form of intolerance; (d) has your State adopted measures to counter the dissemination of discriminatory, racist and xenophobic messages on the Internet, in accordance with paragraphs 144 to 147 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and to promote a positive use of the Internet to foster social harmony and to combat racism; and (e) has the State undertaken any other action or adopted any other measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or other forms of intolerance, or to promote non-discrimination and equality (e.g. publications, meetings, campaigns)?

4. The deadline for submissions of contributions was 30 July 2006. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights received replies from 25 States; one from a regional organization and four from national human rights institutions. The replies received are summarized in the present report. Original contributions are available for consultation at the Secretariat. Any additional contributions received after the completion of this report will be included in the report to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

II. Contributions received

5. The contributions received concern various activities undertaken by the above-mentioned stakeholders to implement the Durban Programme of Action and/or to combat various forms of discrimination pursuant to the contents of national constitutions and relevant legislations.

A. Member States

6. The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina reported that although it had not adopted a plan of action to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, the prohibition of discrimination was built into its national constitution (which directly incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms) as well as the constitutions of its municipalities. Bosnia and Herzegovina has adopted by succession the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Regarding measures undertaken by the State in combating racism and promoting tolerance and respect for diversity, the Government referred to the Roma Committee of the Council of Ministers, as the Roma constitute the most numerous and vulnerable group in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Government also reported that it was currently engaged in the process of establishing a Council for National Minorities to serve as an advisory body to its Parliamentary Assembly.

7. The Government of Croatia reported that it was in the process of elaborating a National Action Plan against Discrimination. The Government reported on various actions it had undertaken to combat discrimination including the adoption of various national programmes on protection from domestic violence, education on human rights, for youth and the Roma. The anticipated National Action Plan against Discrimination was expected to provide for the implementation of awareness campaigns on the dangers of discrimination and how it could be countered effectively.

8. The Government of the Czech Republic reported on the legislative process leading towards the adoption of a draft Act against Discrimination, which is now before the Legal Committee. The Government mentioned various activities which it had undertaken to combat racism, discrimination and xenophobia, particularly as directed against ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees and displaced persons.

9. The Government of Cyprus reported that, following the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cyprus adopted in 2002 a National Action Plan against Racism (NAPAR). The Council of Ministers appointed a Ministerial Committee to closely monitor the implementation of the Action Plan with a view to assessing its impact and effectiveness. The Action Plan built upon and enhanced policies and strategies to combat racism in Cyprus.

10. The Government of Chile reported that a Plan for Equality and Non-discrimination had been adopted covering the period 2004-2006, consistent with the provisions of paragraph 191 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which calls on Governments to elaborate action plans. The aim of the Plan is to contribute to the progressive elimination of discrimination and to incorporate the needs of various vulnerable groups into State policies. The Government

specified the different areas that were addressed under the Plan, including relevant initiatives undertaken within the public services sector. Regarding public-awareness campaigns, the Government reported that it launched, in coordination with the consulate of Peru and in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, a pilot programme on tolerance and non-discrimination aimed at combating discrimination, xenophobia and social exclusion and strengthening integration.

11. The Government of Denmark reported that its Parliament adopted in May 2003 an Act on Ethnic Equal Treatment aimed at ensuring a high level of protection against racial discrimination and implementing the European Union Racial Equality Directive. Under the Act, the prohibition of discrimination is accompanied by provision for compensation for non-monetary damages. The Act was amended in 2004 to provide the Danish Institute for Human Rights with the mandate to receive individual complaints concerning discrimination in labour.

12. The Government adopted in November 2003 an Action Plan to Promote Equal Treatment and Diversity and to Combat Racism. Under the Action Plan, several initiatives are undertaken with the aim of promoting dialogue towards enhanced understanding of democracy, citizenship and diversity, and encouraging participation of ethnic minorities in political life. Additionally, another effort involves the establishment in 2003 of the Danish Centre for International Studies and Human Rights and in 1999 of the Council for Ethnic Minorities. The Government also referred to the European Union designation of 2007 as "European Year for Equal Opportunities for All". The commemoration of the year will focus on bringing awareness to the right to equal treatment and the benefits of diversity for European societies.

13. The Government of Ecuador reported that the limited contribution of Afro-descendants and indigenous people to the economy of the country was due to their situation of social exclusion. The two groups were disadvantaged as to access to education and certain fields of employment. The Government explained that this exclusion was not the result of a discriminatory policy but of weaknesses in the social and economic situation of the country.

14. The Government referred to several provisions of the Constitution protecting all citizens of Ecuador against all forms of discrimination and to the creation of several institutions established for the protection of the human rights of Afro-descendant and indigenous people, including the monitoring of cases involving human rights violations. The Government also provided information on the involvement of Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples' communities in the decisions affecting their lives. In this connection, while recognizing the difficulties faced by these communities, the Government reported that the Constitution and the law protect the human rights of persons belonging to these communities in specific areas such as the right to have their identity recognized; ownership of ancestral land; the right not to be displaced from their land; and the right to participate in the use, administration and conservation of natural resources.

15. The Government of Finland reported on various measures undertaken at the European Union level to combat racism and discrimination. In particular, the Race Equality Directives of 29 June 2000 and the Employment Framework Directives of 27 November 2000 both prohibit discrimination and provide for equality of treatment of all persons, irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. Recognizing that the

implementation of legislation alone does not suffice to win the fight against discrimination, the Government listed several European Union anti-discrimination initiatives covering the period ranging from 2001 through 2006. These initiatives were undertaken by the Council of the European Union and the European Commission and include for instance a Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination and a Framework Strategy for Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunities for All. At the national level, the Government indicated that, as of 2001, the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Ministries of Education, Social Affairs and Health and the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior have been engaged in the implementation of training and an awareness-raising campaign entitled: STOP — Finland Forward without Discrimination. The training and campaign were aimed at enhancing equality in Finnish society.

16. The Government of France reported that during 2005 there had been a decrease in incidents involving acts motivated by racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia in France. The Government referred to its wide array of legislation aimed at prosecuting and sanctioning discriminatory acts. The Government reported that one of the findings of its Interministerial Committee against Racism and Anti-Semitism is the role of education as central in facing the challenges associated with combating racism and anti-Semitism. In addition to its contribution to and collaboration with regional bodies such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, at the international level France favours various international initiatives against racism including the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions adopted on 20 October 2005, by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

17. The Government of Guatemala referred to articles 1, 4, 73 and 93 of the National Constitution which, inter alia, guaranteed to all citizens equal treatment and access to health and education. The Government reported on various measures undertaken with regard to the adoption and implementation of anti-discrimination policies and the creation of human rights institutions. In this regard, specific reference was made to the Presidential Commission to Fight Racism and Racial Discrimination (CODISTRA), and the Department for Indigenous Women (DEMI). The Government also mentioned various legislation adopted and in particular, Legislative Decree 19-2003 of 7 May 2003 on the recognition of the Maya languages, Legislative Decree 17-73 of 10 September 2002 reforming the Criminal Code and integrating a provision to criminalize acts of racism and racial discrimination. The Government also provided information on the affirmative action policies adopted which provide for: the recruitment of indigenous persons to senior positions in public service, including the police force which composition now includes 10 per cent of indigenous persons; increasing the budget of the judiciary to allow for, inter alia, access to interpretation services for indigenous peoples; the professionalization of bilingual education; and the adoption of a comprehensive programme for the eradication of extreme poverty.

18. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran reiterated its commitment to cooperate with the thematic mandates of the Commission on Human Rights (which concluded its work on 24 March 2006 and was replaced by the Human Rights Council). It was of the view that constructive interaction with these mechanisms would contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights, provided that

such interaction was based on dialogue, impartiality and fairness and within the legal framework defined by United Nations legal instruments.

19. The Government of Italy reported that, in compliance with European Directive 2000/43/CE and a national decree, the Government established the National Office against Racial Discrimination, which had been operating as of November 2004. The aim of the National Office was to prevent discrimination, promote affirmative action, monitor equality of treatment and verify the degree of efficiency of legal measures in combating racism and discrimination. Through the National Office, a series of awareness-raising measures aimed at increasing the awareness of the public regarding the need for integration in education, and non-discrimination in the media and sports had been initiated.

20. The Government of Kazakhstan reported that it had adopted no specific action plan aiming to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, but that the principles of impartiality and non-discrimination were guaranteed by the Constitution and the National Law of Kazakhstan. The Government, in compliance with the decree of 3 May 2005, which enforced the Civil Servants' Code of Conduct, ensured the prevention of racial intolerance in the civil service allowing all individuals to be part of the civil service irrespective of their ethnic origin, religion, language, and other factors. Kazakhstan also collaborated with the United Nations specialized agencies to combat racial discrimination.

21. The Government of the Republic of Korea reported that it was the process of elaborating a National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights which would provide for policies in the field of human rights and anti-discrimination. In particular, the Action Plan will include measures and methods to prevent racial unrests and violence and strengthen human rights education. The Government referred to the National Human Rights Commission, which was established in 2001 and mandated to investigate claims of discrimination and implement international human rights law obligations.

22. The Government of Mauritius reported that, although it had not adopted an Action Plan, it had elaborated an Equal Opportunity Act which should be enacted soon for the enhanced protection of non-discrimination and the promotion of equality. In addition to provisions contained in the Constitution which provide for protection against discrimination, the National Human Rights Commission, which was established under the Protection of Human Rights Act, endeavoured to promote racial harmony in Mauritius.

23. The Government of Mexico reported on many anti-discrimination initiatives undertaken by various governmental departments, including the Ministries of the Interior, External Relations, Social Development, Public Education, Health, Labour and Education, the Office of the Attorney-General, the National Institute for Women, the National Council of Indigenous People and the National Human Rights Commission. The initiatives at issue included campaigns to raise awareness on the part of the public at large and specific target groups as to the content of anti-discrimination legislations and policies, and activities which entailed collaboration with various institutions with the goal to mainstreaming the fight against racism in the programmes of work of all governmental departments. The Government reported in particular of the adoption in June 2003 of the Federal Law for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and the creation of the National Council for the

Prevention of Discrimination (CONAPRED). The mandate of CONAPRED allows for the lodging of complaints by alleged victims of discrimination for acts committed by private as well as public officials and institutions.

24. The Government of the Netherlands reported that, following broad consultations at the national level, the Government adopted the National Action Plan against Racism that was submitted to Parliament in 2003. The Government noted that the structure of its Action Plan differed from that of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action based on the changing patterns of prejudice and discrimination that call for a different approach. As such, the Action Plan was structured around three themes: the living environment; awareness-raising; and equal treatment in employment. The Coordinating Cabinet Member for the Action Plan submitted in June 2005 a progress report covering the period from 2003 through 2005 during which social tensions erupted in the Netherlands and resulted in additional effort being deployed by the Government to implement the National Action Plan.

25. The Government of Oman reported on its Basic Law, which prohibited discrimination based on race, colour or social position. Since the start of its renaissance in 1970, Oman has tirelessly worked to consolidate the bases of justice and equality among its citizens and as a result has adopted a series of laws and regulations upholding the basic rights of everyone without discrimination.

26. The Government of Poland reported that the Council of Ministers approved on 18 May 2004 the National Programme for Counteracting Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2004-2009). The National Programme was adopted to implement the recommendations contained in the Durban Programme of Action and was to be implemented by various ministries. The Government reported that the Programme, which covers a five-year span, was intended to complete specific achievements every year in the areas of education, training, and awareness-raising. In the final year of the programme, its implementation would be evaluated as to its effectiveness in combating discrimination.

27. The Government of Romania reported that a National Council for Combating Discrimination was established by ordinance to implement the principle of equality and ensure equal treatment for all as provided for by the national anti-discrimination legislation. The role of the National Council was essentially that of working towards the elimination of discrimination, thereby contributing to a social climate of trust and respect. The mandate of the National Council was structured around three pillars aimed at preventing discrimination, monitoring discriminatory acts, sanctioning them, and providing specialized assistance to victims of discrimination.

28. The Government of Slovakia reported that the Third National Action Plan to Prevent All Forms of Discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Other Manifestations of Intolerance was adopted to cover the period 2004-2005. A fourth Action Plan to cover 2006-2008 was adopted by the Government on 5 April 2006. The latter Action Plan provides for educational programmes consistent with the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education including the organization of various awareness-raising activities aimed at sensitizing students, State and public officials with a view to prevent incidents of discrimination and to uphold the principle of equality. The Government also reported on its activities to promote non-discrimination as connected with the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia.

29. The Government of Slovenia reported that it had created two bodies to implement anti-discrimination measures. They are the Advocate for the Principle of Equality and the Council of the Government for the Implementation of the Principle of Equal Treatment. The main responsibility of the Advocate, who took up office on 1 January 2005, was to hear cases of alleged violations of the right to non-discrimination and to issue her findings. The Council was a consultative body composed of representatives of individual ministries and members of civil society and its main tasks were monitoring the implementation of non-discrimination measures and proposing initiatives and making recommendations for their enhancement.

30. The Government of Ukraine reported that its Constitution contained several articles providing for protection against discrimination. In addition, the Declaration on National Minority Rights, the National Minorities Act and the Citizens Association Act all provided for equality of treatment for all, irrespective of ethnicity, race, language, religion and other factors.

31. The Government of Uruguay reported on the Consultation of South American Organizations on the Promotion of Policies for Racial Equality, held in November 2004. At that event, the participating Governments agreed to undertake various activities to improve the situation of persons of African descent and indigenous peoples.

B. Regional organizations

32. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia reported that its work was informed by developments stemming from the Durban Declaration, in as much as European Union member States were engaged in activities to implement the Durban Programme of Action. The European Monitoring Centre submitted that its reports listed evidence of discrimination based on available national data in European Union member States. According to the European Monitoring Centre, the key challenges reside in overcoming shortcomings in data collection by member States recording incidents and monitoring progress to overcome obstacles to racial equality in employment, housing and education and in tackling racist violence. In light of the interdependence of these obstacles, the European Monitoring Centre believed that there was a need to develop policy across government departments and a more integrated approach in the design of the relevant policies to ensure that integration goes hand in hand with equality and non-discrimination.

C. National human rights institutions

33. The Aman Centre for Human Rights reported on the training courses it organized on human rights education. Its participation in the Durban Conference led to the organization of a seminar on tolerance and combating discrimination.

34. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation reported that it had taken the initiative to broadly disseminate to Canadians the report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance by posting it on its website. Regarding its activities in the fields of redress and repatriation, the Canadian Race Relations Foundation had begun to develop a formal policy position, which would direct the manner in which the

Organization would engage with communities, governments and other actors on this subject. Canadian Race Relations Foundation continues to play an integral role in promoting awareness and increasing understanding among Canadians on racism and anti-discrimination through educational workshops. The Canadian Race Relations Foundation had been instrumental in the launching of the National Youth Anti-racism Network, which offered a national youth voice of anti-racism in the international arena.

35. The Muslim World League, based in Saudi Arabia, submitted that it had been working vigorously to fight towards the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The Organization referred to its participation in various conferences on human rights and anti-discrimination and its publication of useful booklets on human rights and combating racism and discrimination.

36. The Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras specified that the Honduran Fraternal Black Organization had been conducting an intensive campaign to ensure that the Griffon people was fully acquainted with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the commitments made by Honduras regarding the total elimination of racism and discrimination. The Organization for Community and Ethnic Development had carried out various activities to promote the rights of minority populations and in particular those of the Afro-Honduran population. Additionally, various public forums had been organized to benefit the combat against racism and discrimination.

III. Update on activities

37. Below is a summary on various developments which have taken place during the year concerning the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

A. United Nations human rights mechanisms

38. During its sixty-eighth session, held from 20 February to 10 March 2006, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) adopted concluding observations following consideration of two initial State party reports and of periodic reports from six States parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Committee also adopted a decision under its early warning and urgent action procedures as well as two opinions on the merits of individual communications. The Committee adopted guidelines for follow-up to concluding observations. It also considered its first follow-up report concerning the implementation of recommendations addressed to States parties in opinions adopted by the Committee following the examination of individual communications.

39. The Committee held a general debate on the issue of double discrimination based on race and religion and decided to reconsider this question at future sessions. The Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mr. Doudou Diène, held a dialogue with the Committee on his recent activities and also discussed the challenges associated with discrimination based on race and religion.

40. The Special Rapporteur submitted reports to the sixty-second session of the Commission of Human Rights on a summary of cases transmitted to Governments and replies received (E/CN.4/2006/16/Add.1); his mission to Brazil (E/CN.4/2006/16/Add.3); preliminary notes on his mission to Switzerland (E/CN.4/2006/16/Add.4); his mission to Japan (E/CN.4/2006/16/Add.2 and Add.2/Corr.1); the situation of Muslims and Arabs in various parts of the world (E/CN.4/2006/17); and a report updating his study on political platforms which promote or incite racial discrimination (E/CN.4/2006/54).

41. In his annual report to the Commission pursuant to its resolution 2005/64, the Special Rapporteur reiterated the dual approach that he has adopted in the discharge of his mandate: close monitoring and analysis of old and new forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia; and a strategy to combat them that encompasses approaches that are political, legal as well as cultural and ethical. The political and legal approaches in conjunction with the follow-up activities to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action are based on two major priorities which rest with Governments. They are: the expression of a firm political will to combat racism, and the adoption and implementation of national legislation against racism, discrimination and xenophobia. The intellectual and ethical strategies seek to promote better understanding of the deep cultural roots of racism, and its ideological, cultural and psychological foundations, processes and mechanisms.

42. The Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action submitted its report to the Commission (E/CN.4/2006/18) on its fourth session, held in Geneva from 16 to 27 January 2006.

43. During the first week of the session, a high-level seminar on racism and the Internet and on complementary international standards for combating racism was convened by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as requested by the Commission in its resolution 2005/64. The second week of the session was devoted to a thematic analysis of racism and globalization. Various panellists, including ministers, high-ranking government officials, consultants and experts made presentations on the themes examined during the session.

44. The part of the seminar on racism and the Internet triggered discussions on the use of the Internet to disseminate racist content and to promote racial hatred and violence. The Intergovernmental Working Group concluded that a combination of measures in the form of self-regulatory initiatives combined with education about racist content on the Internet and the fostering of tolerance could be the most effective ways to alleviate the problem.

45. The part of the seminar on complementary international standards was devoted to discussions on: the implementation of existing international instruments, as well as ways to enhance their effectiveness in the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; the identification of gaps in international human rights law with a view to preparing complementary standards to address them; and the outlining of a format for complementary international standards to strengthen and update existing instruments.

46. The Intergovernmental Working Group stressed the importance for States to take all adequate steps to strengthen the implementation of international human rights instruments dealing with racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and

related intolerance and in particular those contained in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Several strategies for the strengthening of implementation were identified. Regarding procedural gaps, the Intergovernmental Working Group recommended that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination conduct a further study on possible measures to strengthen implementation through the update of its monitoring procedures.

47. Furthermore, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is "to select a group of five highly qualified experts to study the content and scope of the substantive gaps in the existing international instruments to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance". Under the thematic analysis of racism and globalization, the Intergovernmental Working Group highlighted that effort must be deployed by all stakeholders to ensure that cultural diversity is protected in the current process of globalization. It adopted by consensus several recommendations on each of the themes discussed during the session.

48. The Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent held its fifth session from 29 August 2005 to 2 September 2005 and submitted its report to the Commission (E/CN.4/2006/19).

49. During the session, the Working Group examined the following themes: mainstreaming the situation of people of African descent in plans for achieving the Millennium Development Goals; the empowerment of women of African descent; and the role of political parties in the integration of people of African descent into political life and decision-making processes. Overall, the experts shared the same views concerning: the difficulties in evaluating the extent of discrimination due to conceptual limitations and inadequacies in the collection of data; the necessity of developing and implementing positive measures aimed at accelerating the achievement of substantive equality of persons of African descent and especially that of women and girls; and the creation of strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at the national level in order to assess progress made, the effectiveness of such measures and the identification of good practices. The Working Group adopted several recommendations on each theme. The Working Group also adopted a three-year programme of work and developed towards this end a set of modalities of action to further the implementation of its mandate.

50. At the invitation of the Government of Belgium, the Working Group undertook an official mission to the country from 13 to 17 June 2005. In its report to the Commission (E/CN.4/2006/19/Add.1), the Working Group gave an account on the mission and its examination of the general situation of people of African descent in Belgium, described the position in which people of African descent find themselves in that country and their exposure to discrimination. The Working Group also outlined action undertaken at various levels to improve the conditions of people of African descent living in Belgium.

51. The group of Independent Eminent Experts on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action did not hold its third meeting during the inter-sessional period. Hence, no report was transmitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its sixty-second session.

B. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

52. The Office of the High Commissioner continues its work towards the effective implementation of the Durban Programme of Action, particularly through the activities of its Anti-Discrimination Unit. The Office provides assistance to international and national actors on their work in countering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and support to the mechanisms established to follow up on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The Office provided substantive and organizational support to the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and the group of Independent Eminent Experts.

1. Examining the possibility of developing a racial equality index

53. The High Commissioner submitted her report (E/CN.4/2006/14) on examining the possibility of developing a racial equality index, in accordance with paragraph 29 of Commission resolution 2005/64.

54. In order to respond effectively to the request made by the Commission, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted research to determine the conceptual and empirical aspects that should be taken into consideration in developing a racial equality index (E/CN.4/2005/17). In addition, a mapping exercise was conducted on previous initiatives and promising practices in countries and organizations where efforts were already under way to develop a racial equality index or a possible anti-discrimination index. Moreover, a consultation was organized by the Office of the High Commissioner to gather expert views on the process from a broad range of stakeholders, including experts from United Nations agencies, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions. The report contains the summary of discussions on the different components relevant in the construction of the index, with a view to assessing its feasibility. The advantages and disadvantages of constructing the index were identified, the difficulties and obstacles discussed and some solutions proposed.

2. Organization of and participation in a regional workshop and a conference

55. The Office of the High Commissioner, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, organized a regional workshop for the Americas entitled "Strategies for the inclusion of people of African descent in programmes to reduce poverty, especially to achieve Millennium Development Goal 1". The workshop was held in Chincha, Peru, from 2 to 4 November 2005, and was hosted by the Government of Peru (E/CN.4/2006/23).

56. The workshop's main objective was to develop strategies which involved people of African descent in the development, implementation, monitoring and assessment of poverty-reduction programmes. The workshop examined strategies which could serve to reach specific poverty-reduction objectives for people of African descent living in the Americas. These strategies were based on human rights approaches which encompassed particularly the principles of equality and non-discrimination, in addition to responsibility and participation.

57. A Regional Conference of the Americas (North, South and Central America and the Caribbean), organized by the Government of Brazil through the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Policies on Racial Equality (SEPPIR) and the Government of Chile with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was held in Brasilia from 26 to 28 July 2006 on progress made and challenges remaining with regard to the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

58. The Conference involved government officials, national human rights institutions, governmental institutions for the promotion of racial equality, representatives of civil society and representatives of indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, migrants and other groups' victims of racism of the different countries of the Americas. Experts of the United Nations, as well as representatives of regional organizations and specialized United Nations agencies, also participated.

59. A final document of the Conference incorporated the following provisions upon which consensus was reached by the participants: recognition of the positive role played by national institutions in fighting racism and racial discrimination in different countries of the region and the need to strengthen their capacities for an enhanced role in promoting racial equality; the need to further develop national monitoring mechanisms, as well as the creation of indicators to measure the impact of national policies and programmes against racism and racial discrimination; the development of human rights training programmes for public officials, particularly in the field of administration of justice; a call to Governments, as well as international institutions to establish reliable and disaggregated data on race, sex, geographical distribution and socio-economic indicators, to support the development of public policies for the promotion of racial equality; a call to all Governments of the region to promote the effective application of international human rights instruments on racism and racial discrimination; a call for efforts towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to include the recommendations contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action; the need to adopt and effectively implement policies of affirmative action; the need to give more visibility to the concerns of Afro-descendants, indigenous and migrant populations; the recommendation to address the issues of multiculturalism and diversity; and, a call for United Nations agencies to further assist and support regional initiatives, with regard to the review of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and to request the Human Rights Council to consider in its agenda the review of the Durban process at its earliest convenience.

60. During the Conference, the Office of the High Commissioner and SEPPIR launched the "Compilation of the concluding observations of the Committee for the Elimination of the Racial Discrimination for Latin American and the Caribbean countries (1970-2006)".

61. Following the Conference, on 29 July, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance hosted an expert seminar to discuss issues pertaining to political platforms that promote racial discrimination. The Special Rapporteur will be submitting a report on the seminar to the Human Rights Council and the proceedings of the seminar will be made public.

3. Activities with non-governmental organizations and youth groups

62. The Office of the High Commissioner pursued its practice of sharing information on a regular basis and facilitating non-governmental organizations' and youth participation in meetings, seminars and workshops which the Anti-Discrimination Unit convenes or to which it is invited.

63. To commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2006, the Office of the High Commissioner organized, in collaboration with the International Labour Office and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, panel discussions on the theme "Fighting everyday racism". As racism continues to appear every day at the workplace, in schools and neighbourhoods, on the streets and even in sports, the focus of the commemoration revolved around effective measures which could be undertaken and vehicles which could be used to foster a culture of tolerance in our daily lives.

64. It is through a victim-oriented approach that the issue of fighting everyday racism was explored at the commemoration. The primary objectives of marking the international day were: to encourage interaction and cross-fertilization of cultures and civilizations through education and awareness-raising, with a view to promoting mutual respect, diversity and tolerance; to increase the level of public awareness and understanding of everyday racist attitudes or behaviours; to foster the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding among people as essential for eliminating everyday racism, promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and peace; and to encourage the full and active participation of all stakeholders in the elaboration, planning and implementation of anti-discrimination activities with a view to contribute to progressive change within their own communities and the world at large.

65. A series of "everyday" events concentrating on the following thematic settings were organized: everyday racism at the workplace; everyday racism in school; and giving voice to the victims of racial discrimination. Furthermore, an exhibition of art work entitled "Racial discrimination through the eyes of young people" and another exhibition of works entitled "Moi, raciste?" developed by the Centre professionel du littoral neuchâtelois of Neuchatel, Switzerland, were organized at the Palais des Nations (Geneva).

IV. Conclusions

66. **The present report transmits information received by the Office of the High Commissioner pursuant to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 60/144. Replies were received from Governments and other stakeholders engaged in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.**

67. **Replies from States revealed their commitments to implement the call under paragraph 191 of the Durban Programme of Action, inviting them to elaborate action plans to combat racism and to provide the Office of the High Commissioner with such action plans and other relevant materials on the measures undertaken in order to implement provisions of the Programme of Action. Given that the effective implementation of action plans requires a**

certain amount of time, it is therefore too early for many States to measure their effectiveness.

68. **The adoption of action plans in consultation with national human rights institutions, civil society and other institutions created by law to combat racism constitute an important step in the right direction. While securing an adequate framework is crucial, implementation remains a constant challenge.**

69. **Very important steps to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance at both the international and national levels have resulted in the improvement of the lives of victims. Unfortunately, much more remains to be done and the recommendations contained in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action provide an agenda for States and other stakeholders to bolster their protection against discrimination of all kinds, which in turn will foster social harmony benefiting all.**